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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000042

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
SBU DELIBERATIVE PROCESS
DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E, ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU
CJTJF-HOA FOR POLAD
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA-WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-01-15
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [SO](#) [DJ](#) [XTAG](#)
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ADVOCATES QUICK PRESIDENTIAL
SUCCESSION IN SOMALIA

REF: a) A. DJIBOUTI 18, b) B. ADDIS ABABA 49 (NOTAL)

CLASSIFIED BY: Eric M. Wong, DCM, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy, Djibouti; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Sharing views he said he had conveyed to Djiboutian President Guelleh in a recent "brainstorming session," Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf said the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) must be pushed to name new parliamentarians in time to elect a new President of Somalia before the end of January. As a fall-back, he proposed that the current Transitional Federal Parliament elect the President, while the ARS names the Prime Minister. According to Youssouf, however, Sheikh Sharif may not be content to replace Nur Adde as Prime Minister, but rather seeks to be President of Somalia. FM Youssouf reiterated claims that Yemen, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia may provide financial or material assistance to support joint TFG-ARS security forces. Youssouf welcomed visiting USAU Amb. Simon's report of progress in mobilizing new forces for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and raised the idea of deploying troops from the East Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) to Somalia, to reinforce AU forces there, if given sufficient funding and equipment. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador, visiting Ambassador to the African Union Amb. Simon, USAU CJTJF-HOA Country Coordination Element (CCE) Captain Bart Moore, and DCM met with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf on January 11.

NEED FOR ALL-INCLUSIVE PARLIAMENT TO SELECT UNITY PRESIDENT

¶3. (C) Somalia is only now just emerging from an 18-year "gestation" period of peace initiatives, Youssouf said, with the "4.5" clan representation formula marking what he hoped would be the last phase of clan-based solutions. Alluding to the Council of Islamic Courts' opposition to Ethiopian intervention, Youssouf said the Somali political process had been "polluted" by "religious principles," with Somalis having spent the last two years calling for holy war against foreign occupiers. However, with the recent resignation of TFG President Abdillahi Yusuf, and the withdrawal of Ethiopian military forces, Somalia now faced a new reality, as it lacked these justifications for continued conflict. Youssouf confirmed that TFG-ARS talks, under the auspices of the UN, would resume in Djibouti the week of January 15.

¶4. (C) FM Youssouf underscored that it would be preferable for a newly formed "all-inclusive" parliament to name the next president of Somalia, in the wake of Yusuf's December 29 resignation. TFG and moderate ARS representatives needed to form a new unity government for Somalia by January 29, in accordance with provisions of Somalia's transitional charter calling for a new president to be named within 30 days of a predecessor's resignation. Youssouf called for international pressure on Somali parties to name additional MPs--and subsequently a new president--"immediately." Otherwise, Somalia once again risked protracted consultations continuing for years.

¶5. (C) Youssouf said that ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed had been told to identify 200 additional MPs representing the ARS (in accordance with the November 25 Djibouti Process communique) by January 20; this new expanded parliament would then collectively select a new president. If, however, the ARS failed to observe the deadline for naming new MPs, Youssouf said he had proposed an alternative to Djibouti's President Guelleh: that the current 275-member Transitional Federal Parliament elect a new president to replace Yusuf, while the ARS then select the head of government (i.e., prime minister). Youssouf urged that international partners press the ARS to name its new members quickly, but be ready to endorse a decision by the current parliament as a fall-back position.

ARS CHAIRMAN REPORTEDLY SEEKS SOMALI PRESIDENCY

¶6. (C) According to Youssouf, Sheikh Sharif could easily
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displace current Somali PM Nur Adde, who lacked political vision and charisma. However, rather than be content to serve as prime minister, Sheikh Sharif's ambition drove him to seek to be president of Somalia, Youssouf said. Egypt was prepared to organize a meeting with ARS hard-liners in Asmara, Youssouf added. The GODJ had told Sharif that having political vision and charisma were more important than dispersing money, and had urged Sharif to return from Libya, where he had traveled seeking financial assistance.

¶7. (C) Calling Sheikh Sharif "headstrong" and "not easily

manipulated," Youssouf noted that in early 2007, following Ethiopia's entry into Somalia, Djibouti had counseled Sheikh Sharif to acknowledge the legitimacy of the TFG and to leverage its recognition; Sheikh Sharif had refused. Sheikh Sharif now faced a weak prime minister, and a sympathetic international community, but was young and lacking in experience, Youssouf said.

AMISOM FORCE GENERATION

¶8. (SBU) Noting the importance of maintaining progress on security, as well as on the political track, Amb. Simon reviewed the current status of force generation for AMISOM (ref B), as well as the TFG Defense Minister's claim to be able to muster six battalions of troops. Amb. Simon noted that AMISOM had been "holding its own" during the Ethiopian withdrawal, and had faced "no onslaught" by newly emboldened fighters.

¶9. (C) FM Youssouf welcomed news of progress on force generation, explaining that the GCDJ had assessed that AMISOM would not/not be strengthened, and had therefore focused on the importance of empowering Somali forces. He reiterated (reftel) that several countries may support joint TFG-ARS security forces: at the recently concluded Sanaa Forum, Yemen had announced \$1.5 million in support for salaries and light equipment; Sudan may provide food and other rations; and Saudi Arabia, while complaining about the worldwide economic crisis, had nevertheless been "approached" to provide a total of \$6-10 million to pay salaries (of approximately \$100/month) for one year.

¶10. (C) Reiterating observations made earlier in the week to Ambassador (septel), by EASBRIG commander Brigadier General Osman Nour Soubagale (seconded from Djibouti to EASBRIG in Addis Ababa), Youssouf asserted that EASBRIG troops could reinforce existing AMISOM forces, in the absence of additional battalions from the AU or the UN. EASBRIG troops were operationally ready, but would require financial assistance to deploy, he said. The deployment of EASBRIG troops would be an alternative only if AMISOM could not be strengthened, Youssouf added. (NOTE. In a separate meeting with Ambassador, the EASBRIG commander asserted that some 6,000 EASBRIG troops were ready to deploy to Somalia, including troops from Djibouti. END NOTE.)

¶11. (C) COMMENT. FM Youssouf's frank critique of Somali leaders reflects that he is one of the most prominent Afar members (and therefore a minority) in Djibouti's predominantly ethnic Issa government. While he shared his views as conveyed to Djiboutian President Guelleh, he avoided discussion of the Pres. Guelleh's response. Having hosted several rounds of TFG-ARS talks since May 2008, Djibouti is eager to build on their momentum, particularly as continued instability in neighboring Somalia directly affects Djibouti--e.g., through increased refugee flows, and higher shipping insurance premiums due to fears of Somali piracy. While the Djiboutians are floating the idea of an EASBRIG role in Somalia, it is unclear that there is sufficient EASBRIG capability to perform this role without major additional support. END COMMENT.

¶12. (U) USAU Amb. Simon cleared this message.
SWAN

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:6b30f14f-d00d-47a6-9c